



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**2026-2027 Guidelines for MPH
Integrative Learning Experience
Division of Health Behavior and Health Promotion**

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GENERAL GUIDELINES

The integrative learning experience (ILE) for the Division of Health Behavior and Health Promotion is intended to provide students with the opportunity to integrate and synthesize knowledge and experience obtained during their academic course of study. For ideas of appropriate topics, speak with your advisor. The ILE is completed at the end of degree requirements, and although every project will be different, there are some general guidelines that are relevant to every project.

1. Students must choose an academic advisor for their final year of the MPH program, who will also serve as their ILE advisor. The ILE advisor needs to be a faculty member in the Division of Health Behavior and Health Promotion and must have category M or P Graduate Faculty status at Ohio State (status can be searched under “faculty” at <https://gradsch.osu.edu/faculty-and-staff/gradforms>).
2. Students must also choose another faculty member with a primary or courtesy appointment in the College of Public Health as a “second reader.” Your second reader must have category M or P Graduate Faculty status at Ohio State. If your ILE advisor is not your academic advisor, then you must select your academic advisor as your second reader. The ILE advisor and the second reader constitute your ILE Project Committee. You may add additional readers to your Committee, although this is rare.
3. The topic and format of each ILE must be approved by your ILE advisor. Most ILEs will fit approximately into one of the following areas: (A) Community assessment for a population identified by an organization or your ILE instructor; (B) Program planning for an organization; (C) Secondary data analysis; or (D) Advocacy Communication Toolkit for an organization. The criteria for each of these options appear on pages 8-15. Other topics and format are possible with the approval of your advisor. Students pursuing an ILE project that does not involve pairing with a community organization (e.g., secondary data analysis) must have worked with an organization outside of OSU for their APE. ILE projects that would require a new submission to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) are not permitted.
4. At least three competencies must be demonstrated (these may include two foundational and one specialization competency, or two specialization and one foundational competency).
5. Students may choose the Master’s Thesis option for their ILE (refer to page 7). If you intend to pursue a research career, discuss the Thesis option with your advisor.
6. This document assumes that most students will be completing their ILE for a spring semester graduation. If that does not apply to you, please identify an alternative projected timeline with your advisor.
7. In the Autumn semester before your intended graduation, register for the 1 credit seminar, PUBHHBP 7899.01. This seminar will get you started on a high-quality project. In addition, to earn full credit for this seminar, you are expected to meet with and work with your project adviser to begin working on the ILE.
 - As part of PUBHHBP 7899.01, and before beginning work on your ILE, you need to write a 1-2 page proposal which describes your topic, what you will do for the project, which of the project types (above) best describes your project, and what competencies you will be addressing. If you subsequently decide to change your project or project advisor, you must write a new proposal as above, and inform, in writing, any project advisor or reader who will not be involved in the revised project.
 - Also as part of PUBHHBP 7899.01, during the Autumn semester, you will submit a 1-page outline and 6-8 page (double spaced) draft literature review on your ILE topic. This literature review should ultimately form the first sections of your ILE document.
8. In the Spring semester in which you intend to graduate, register for the second 1 credit seminar course, PUBHHBP 7899.02, and submit paperwork to register for 2 credits of ILE credit, PUBHLTH 7998, with your advisor.

- During spring semester, you will present your project to your advisor and second reader at a review meeting for formal approval (i.e., your Master's Exam). This meeting will comprise an approximately 15-minute presentation of your project to your committee and any invited guests. This will be followed by 15-20 minute Q&A session with your committee (the closed exam portion). At the conclusion of the Q&A period, you will be excused for the committee to deliberate and determine a satisfactory/unsatisfactory outcome.
- Also as part of PUBHHBP 7899.02, at the end of Spring semester, all seminar participants will present their projects in a poster session.

THESIS OPTION

(This page refers only to students who choose to complete a Master's Thesis option for the ILE.)

Students choosing the thesis option are usually planning to pursue a career in research and/or academia. Students will use skills in research design and data analysis. Usually, completion of a thesis option will entail working with original data. Students are expected to analyze data specifically collected for the thesis option or analyze a previously existing data set. A thesis option typically is organized as follows:

Chapter 1	Introduction to the Problem Hypotheses or Problem Statement
Chapter 2	Review of Literature
Chapter 3	Methods
Chapter 4	Results
Chapter 5	Conclusions and Recommendations

Topic choice and manuscript development must be completed under the supervision of an advisor. Students are required to complete a defense of their thesis option before their committee members and interested others. Students choosing a thesis option should plan to present their work at a national meeting and submit it for publication. The Graduate School has additional requirements for a Master's Thesis option and some different forms are required. These requirements can be found in the Graduate School Student Handbook: <https://gradsch.osu.edu/handbook>. The remainder of this document applies only to the ILE. If you think you are interested in completing a Master's Thesis option, discuss that option with your advisor at least two terms before you anticipate graduating.

TIMELINE REQUIREMENTS

On the CPH website is a general timeline checklist list for the requirements of the ILE which can help guide you and your advisor through the ILE process. In addition, the HBHP ILE Project Seminars I & II, include assignments to help you adhere to and meet ILE project requirements. The general timeline of activities as presented in these seminar classes are:

Autumn Semester

Week 4	Submit ILE proposal approval form
Week 8	Submit 1-page outline for the literature review
Week 12	Submit 6-8 page draft of ILE literature review
Week 14	Submit plan for completing project activities during Spring Semester

Spring Semester

Week 8	Submit draft of completed final project
Week 8	Schedule your MPH Exam
Weeks 10 - 13	Complete MPH Exam
Week 14	Submit MPH ILE Project Report to OAPSS at: CPH-Graduation@osu.edu

Your advisor may also ask that you meet other deadlines. Remember, ***you are responsible for meeting all deadlines.*** The Graduate School deadlines for each term are available at the Graduate School <https://gradsch.osu.edu/graduation-calendar>.

The following requirements are especially important:

1. It is expected that your advisor will be kept fully apprised of your progress and will see drafts of your project write-up as it develops. The advisor may require multiple changes before the draft is ready to be presented. Your advisor must see a complete draft of your final ILE report a minimum of one month before your expected MPH exam date. You must provide both of your committee members with a correctly formatted (refer to page 7), clean and final copy of your manuscript 1-2 weeks prior to the review meeting date.
2. By the last day of classes of the term *before* you intend to graduate, complete an online Application for Graduation (found here: <https://gradforms.osu.edu>). Please note: the application is valid for that term only. Generally, the Master's Exam must be completed by the end of week 13. Specific dates will be reviewed in the HBHP ILE Project Seminars I & II . A specific calendar of dates is available on the Graduate School website: <https://gradsch.osu.edu/graduation-calendar-0>.
3. HBHP ILEs are presented in two formats: a Master's Exam with your committee and a poster session. Generally, the Master's Exam must be completed by the end of week 13. Specific dates will be reviewed in ILE seminar courses (PUBHHBP7899.01 and PUBHHBP7899.02). A specific calendar of dates is available on the Graduate School website (<https://gradsch.osu.edu/graduation-calendar-0>). The PUBHHBP7899.02 seminar will guide you through the timeline and process of preparing a poster.
4. Upon completion of the Master's Exam and any final revisions to your approved ILE paper, your committee will electronically approve your Master's Examination Report. Failure for your committee to do so will result in a delay of graduation.

If you do not meet published graduation deadlines but have completed all degree requirements by the last business day prior to the first day of classes for the following term, you may graduate the following term without registering or paying fees. Many HBHP faculty, however, are not available during break to schedule a review meeting or approve revisions to your ILE paper. **Failure to meet these requirements may require you to enroll for an additional term.**

MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS

1. ILE manuscripts should be 15-20 pages (double spaced), including tables and figures (but not including references or appendices).
2. The manuscript must be double spaced, and with a margin of at least one inch on each side.
3. The manuscript must be in Time New Roman 12-point font; however, tables and footnotes may be in 10-point font if necessary.
4. Page numbers should be inserted (center bottom) on each page except the Title Page and the Table of Contents.
5. All Figures and Tables must be numbered, and all appendices must be labeled alphabetically.
6. The Title Page should include the title of the project, the student's name and degree(s), the committee members' names, The Ohio State University, the month and year of the final project.
7. The manuscript should include:
 - A) Title Page
 - B) Table of Contents
 - C) Executive summary
 - D) Literature review
 - E) Project Information (methods, agency description, etc.)
 - F) References
 - G) Tables
 - H) Additional appendices
8. References should follow a standard format such as the formats used by journals. Generally, this should be either American Medical Association (AMA) or American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines.
9. Check with your advisor to see whether they want the final copy as electronic or paper.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

This option for the ILE provides students with an opportunity to take a principal role in planning, implementing, and/or analyzing data from a community assessment. This option involves either (a) an assessment for a community agency/organization or (b) an assessment for a priority population that has been identified by your instructor for the autumn ILE second year seminar (PUBHHBP7899.02). Students pursuing a community assessment ILE project that does not involve partnering with a community organization must have worked with an organization outside of OSU for their APE. The details of the final project report for this area of concentration are provided below. Ideally, the written product is developed and delivered in a manner that is useful to external stakeholders who may be involved in a community assessment, such as non-profit or governmental organizations. Regardless of form, the student should produce a high-quality written product that is appropriate for the student's educational and professional objectives. The sections listed below should be followed in most cases; however, there are times that a modification may be appropriate. In such cases, the student should provide some rationale for the exclusion of a particular section, which must be approved by the student's advisor.

Executive Summary

In approximately 500 words, summarize the project Purpose, Methods, Results, Conclusions, and Implications/Recommendations.

Table of Contents

The table of contents lists all the major topical areas of the document with the corresponding page numbers.

Agency Description (if applicable)

The agency description presents the agency/organization involved in the project. It should include a graphic presentation of the organizational structure and a discussion of how the project fits in with mission and other programs of the agency.

Literature Review

Place the assessment in the context of what is already known about the topic by reviewing relevant research in this area. A literature review is a synthesis of what researchers/scholars have written about a topic organized according to a guiding concept. The purpose is not to list as many articles as possible; rather, the purpose is to demonstrate your ability to recognize relevant information, to synthesize the information and evaluate it according to the guiding concept that you have identified for your project. The literature review should include epidemiological information, related behavioral and environmental information, information about the priority population, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified. Remember to define specific terms that will be used in the text of your report and remember to "tell a story" about the need for a community health assessment. The literature review must include a theoretical framework for your topic and end by listing the objectives of the community assessment project.

Methods

This section should describe each data source used for the assessment, including how, when, where and why each was collected. Examples of what this section may include are a discussion of recruitment strategies for the priority population, data collection instruments that were used, data collection methods, and statistical methods used. Data collection materials (i.e., survey, interview protocol, consent forms) should be included in the appendices.

Results

This section presents the results in the same order as the purpose of the assessment was described earlier. Students are strongly encouraged to employ tables and figures to clarify the presentation of results. The section should highlight key findings from the table and figures but need not reiterate every number from every table in narrative form.

Discussion

Discussion of the findings (interpretation of the data) as they relate to the project objectives should be presented in this section. Include the main implications of and lessons learned from the community health assessment. Discuss how the limitations of your design (i.e., threats to validity) and/or any limitations of the data sources and how these limitations may bias your results. Also, provide recommendations for practice and/or policy.

Ethics

In 250 words or less: what ethical issues were presented by the community assessment project and how were they addressed?

Dissemination Plan

In 250 words or less: explain how you already have (or will soon) share the community assessment with the broader public health community.

References

All literature and personal communications cited in the proposal must be listed in the reference section.

Appendices

Anything not included in the text of the project report that is important for the understanding of the community assessment should be attached as an appendix. All appendices must have references within the text of the project report and must be included as part of the table of contents.

PROGRAM PLANNING

This option for the ILE provides students with an opportunity to take a principal role in planning a health promotion project for a community agency. This must be a “real-life” plan with a partnering organization interested in potentially offering the program. The details of the final project report for this area of concentration are provided below. The sections listed below should be followed in most cases; however, there are times that a modification may be appropriate. In such cases, the student should provide some rationale for the exclusion of a particular section.

Executive Summary

In approximately 500 words, summarize the health issue being addressed, the program goals/objectives, and an overview of how the program would function.

Table of Contents

The table of contents lists all the major topical areas of the document with the corresponding page numbers.

Literature Review

A literature review is a synthesis of what researchers/scholars have written about a topic organized according to a guiding concept. The purpose is not to list as many articles as possible; rather, the purpose is to demonstrate your ability to recognize relevant information, to synthesize the information and evaluate it according to the guiding concept that you have identified for your project. The literature review must include epidemiological information, related behavioral and environmental information, information about the priority population, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified. Remember to define specific terms that will be used in the text of your report and remember to “tell a story” about why the program is needed for the priority population.

Theoretical Framework/Health Behavior Theories

There are several planning models that may be used when planning a health promotion program. In addition, there are numerous health behavior theories that may be used when planning a program to change a health behavior. In this section discuss which planning model and health behavior theories are guiding the program you are planning.

Agency Description

The agency description presents the agency/organization involved in the project. Include a letter or statement from the agency indicating their interest in having the proposed program planned. In this section, provide a graphic presentation of the organizational structure and a discussion of how the project fits in with mission and other programs of the agency.

Program Goals and Objectives

In this section, provide an overview of the specific program, along with goals and objectives. The project goals and objectives define the scope and the direction of the project. Goals are broad timeless statements. Program objectives outline in measurable terms the specific changes (who, what, when, and how much) that will occur due to the program. priority Include a complete description of the program content (i.e., specific messages, slides, lesson plans or other materials) in an appendix.

Intervention Methods/ Data collection

In this section, provide the approach used to achieve the goals and objectives. Examples of what this section may include are a discussion of recruitment strategies for the priority population, instruments that may be used, potential data collection methods, implementation plans, training plans if needed, and a plan for data analysis and evaluation. Include a budget, budget justification, and a timeline in the appendices. Note that this section should be written such that a community organization could implement the program without the need for additional instruction. Visuals and “toolkit” items (e.g., worksheets, instruction manuals) are strongly encouraged.

Ethics

In 250 words or less: what ethical issues were presented by the program planning project and how were they addressed?

Dissemination Plan

In 250 words or less: explain how you already have (or will soon) share the program plan with the broader public health community.

References

All literature and personal communications cited in the proposal must be listed in the reference section.

Appendices

Anything not included in the text of the project report that is important for the understanding of the design, implementation, or conclusions of the project should be attached as an appendix. For example: instruments, consent forms, the budget and budget justification, timeline, etc. All appendices must have references within the text of the project report and must be included as part of the table of contents.

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

This option for the ILE provides students with an opportunity to analyze existing data related to a public health problem or important knowledge gap. Students pursuing a secondary data analysis ILE project that does not involve partnering with a community organization must have worked with an organization outside of OSU for their APE. The details of the final project report for this type of project are provided below. The sections listed below should be followed in most cases; however, modification may be appropriate. In such cases, the student should provide some rationale for the exclusion of a particular section.

Executive Summary

In approximately 500 words, summarize the project Purpose, Methods, Results, Conclusions, and Implications.

Table of Contents

The table of contents lists all the major topical areas of the document with the corresponding page numbers.

Literature Review

Place your analysis in the context of what is already known about the topic by reviewing relevant research in this area. A literature review is a synthesis of what researchers/scholars have written about a topic organized according to a guiding concept. The purpose is not to list as many articles as possible; rather, the purpose is to demonstrate your ability to recognize relevant information, to synthesize the information and evaluate it according to the guiding concept that you have identified for your project. The literature review must include information on what has already been done or what is already known about your topic, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified. Remember to define specific terms that will be used in the text of your report and remember to “tell a story” about why your analyses are needed. The literature review must include a theoretical framework for your topic and end by stating the goal of the present project and listing your hypotheses.

Methods

This section should describe the data set(s) you analyzed and how they were obtained. You should describe the population in the dataset as well as details on the measures used for your analyses. Finally, describe the analyses you conducted.

Results

This section presents the results organized around the proposed questions. Students are strongly encouraged to employ tables and graphs to clarify the presentation of results. The section should highlight key findings from the table and charts but need not reiterate every number from every table in narrative form.

Discussion

Discussion of the findings (interpretation of the data) as they relate to the hypotheses of the study should be presented in this section. Be sure to discuss the strengths and limitations of the data for your proposed analysis (for example, amount of data available, quality of questions on your topic, generalizability of the sample) and how the limitations might bias your results. Conclude by discussing the implications of your results and provide some recommendations for practice and/or policy.

Ethics

In 250 words or less: What ethical issues were presented by the secondary data analysis project and how were they addressed?

Dissemination Plan

In 250 words or less: explain how you already have (or will soon) share the program plan with the broader public health community

References

All literature and personal communications cited in the proposal must be listed in the reference section.

Appendices

Anything not included in the text of the project report that is important for the understanding of the project should be attached as an appendix. All appendices must have references within the text of the project report and must be included as part of the table of contents.

ADVOCACY COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

This option for the ILE provides students with an opportunity to take a principal role in the development of a health promotion advocacy plan and toolkit for a community site, agency, or coalition (see the subsection “toolkit” below for specific examples). The details of the final project report for this area of concentration are provided below. The sections listed below should be followed in most cases; however, modification may be appropriate. In such cases, the student should provide some rationale for the exclusion of a particular section.

Abstract/Executive Summary

In approximately 500 words, summarize the health issue being addressed, the advocacy topic, the project purpose/premise, and how this toolkit works.

Table of Contents

The table of contents lists all the major topical areas of the document with the corresponding page numbers.

Literature Review

A literature review is a synthesis option of what researchers/scholars have written about a topic organized according to a guiding concept. The purpose is not to list as many articles as possible; rather, the purpose is to demonstrate your ability to recognize relevant information, to synthesize the information and evaluate it according to the guiding concept that you have identified for your project. The literature review must include a description of the health problem/issue, epidemiological information, related behavioral and environmental information, information about the target population, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified. Remember to define specific terms that will be used in the text of your report and remember to “tell a story.” Your literature review should end by justifying why an advocacy program is necessary for this community site, agency, or coalition.

Community Site, Agency, or Coalition Description

The description presents the community site/agency/organization/coalition involved in the project. It should include a graphic presentation of the organizational structure and a discussion of how the project fits in with mission and other activities of the community site, agency, or coalition.

Advocacy Strategy

Explain how your communication toolkit would integrate with a broader advocacy plan, using an advocacy paradigm, theory, or strategy framework to guide your explanation. State your toolkit’s goal, objectives, required resources, and activities. Identify your target audience (or audiences), and the type of change desired with that audience (e.g., Are you looking to raise awareness? Improve knowledge? Change attitudes?). Why did you select these toolkit materials over others? What outcomes are expected?

Narrative Explanation

In this section, provide an overview of the toolkit implementation. Note that this section should be written such that a community organization could understand how to use the toolkit without the need for additional instruction.

Toolkit

Develop the communication toolkit items described in the advocacy strategy section. Examples include *but are not limited to* (a) the development of a 2-3 page policy brief, (b) 3-4 infographics, (c) 3-4 images or videos (with accompanying text and tags) to post on social media, (d) an op-ed or press release, (e) an organizational blog / substack post. Tools should be of exceptional quality, and ready for use by the community partner. All toolkit items should be fully executed (e.g., students should not submit the script for a social media video; rather, they should develop the video and provide it in a shareable file format).

Ethics

In 250 words or less: What ethical issues were presented by the advocacy project and how were they addressed?

Dissemination Plan

In 250 words or less: explain how you already have (or will soon) share the toolkit with the community partners.

References

All literature and personal communications cited in the proposal must be listed in the reference section.

Appendices

Anything not included in the text of the project report that is important for the understanding of the advocacy project should be attached as an appendix. All appendices must have references within the text of the project report and must be included as part of the table of contents.